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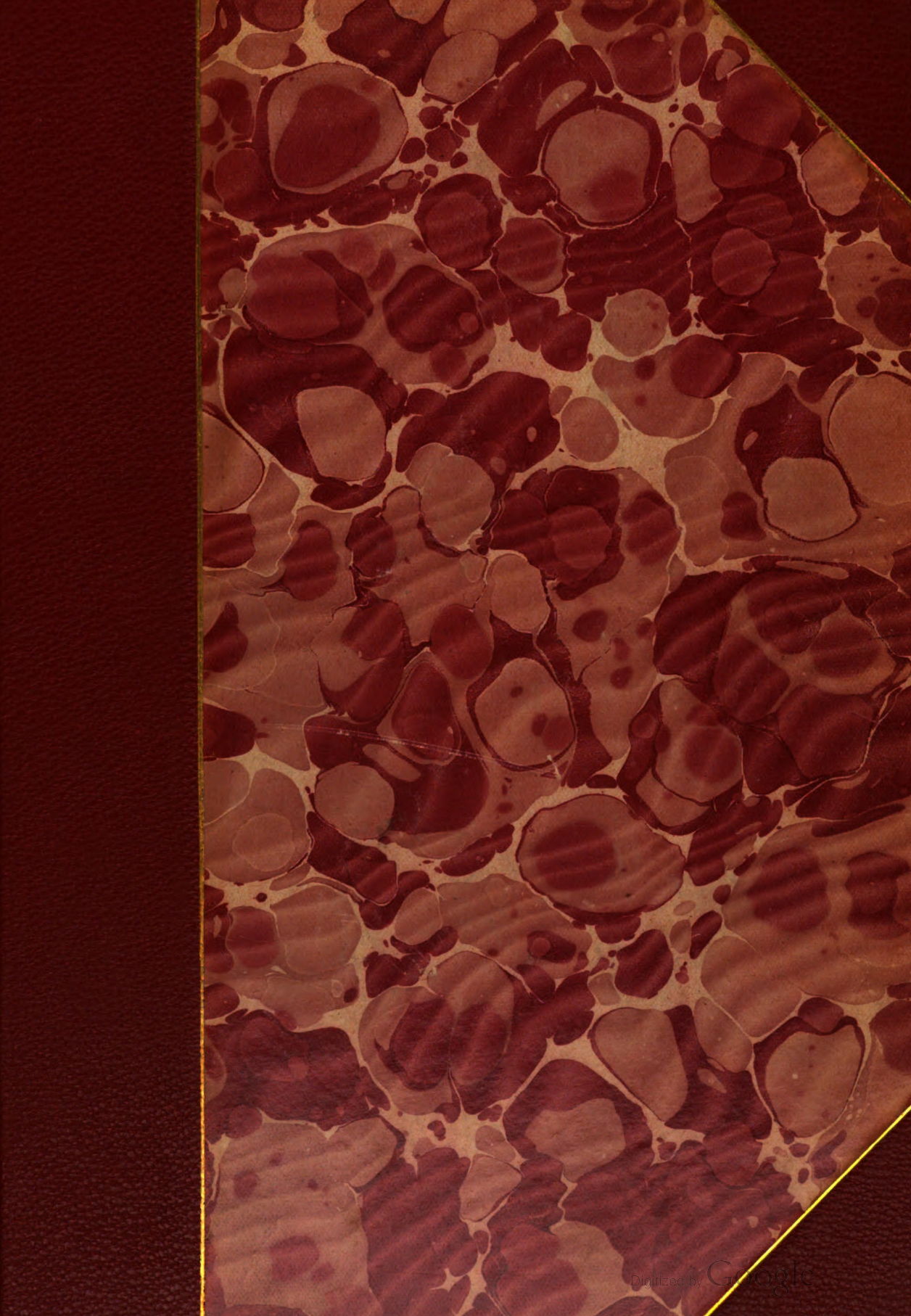
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GIFT OF
THOMAS BARBOUR

October 17, 1946



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HERPETOLOGICAL NOTICES

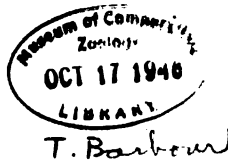
No. 1

JUNE 15, 1912

**Prodrome of a Description of a
New Genus of Ranidæ from
the Loo Choo Islands**

BY
SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR
1912



PRODROME OF A DESCRIPTION OF A
NEW GENUS OF RANIDÆ
FROM THE LOO CHOO ISLANDS

BY

SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

BABINA new genus

Type.—*Rana holsti* Boulenger, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. (6) X, October, 1892, p. 302; Okinawa Island, Loo Choo Islands; No. 92.2.3.19 British Museum; P. A. Holst, collector.

Generic Characters.—Pupil horizontal. Tongue free and deeply notched behind. Vomerine teeth. Tympanum distinct. Fingers free and toes webbed, both with simple tips. Outer metatarsals separated by web. Omosternum and sternum with a strong bony style. Terminal phalanges acute. Pollex present, fleshy tip perforated. Metacarpal of pollex developed into a sharp and powerful spur.

Genus phylogenetically related to *Rana*.

Habitat.—Loo Choo Islands.

SPECIES IN THE GENUS

Babina holsti (Boulenger)

- 1892 *Rana holsti* Boulenger, Ann. Mag. Hist. (6) X, October, 1892, p. 302.
1894 Fritze, Zool. Jahrb. Syst. VII, p. 865; author's separate, p. 16.
1907 Stejneger, Herpetology of Japan and Adjacent Territory, p. 105, fig. 84.

Babina subaspera (Barbour)

- 1908 *Rana subaspera* Barbour, Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash. XXI, p. 189,
"Type, no. 2440 of the amphibian collection in the Museum of
Comparative Zoölogy. Taken in the Riu Kiu Islands, May,
1904, by a Japanese collector of Mr. Alan Owston."
1909 Barbour, Proc. New. Eng. Zool. Club IV, p. 58.

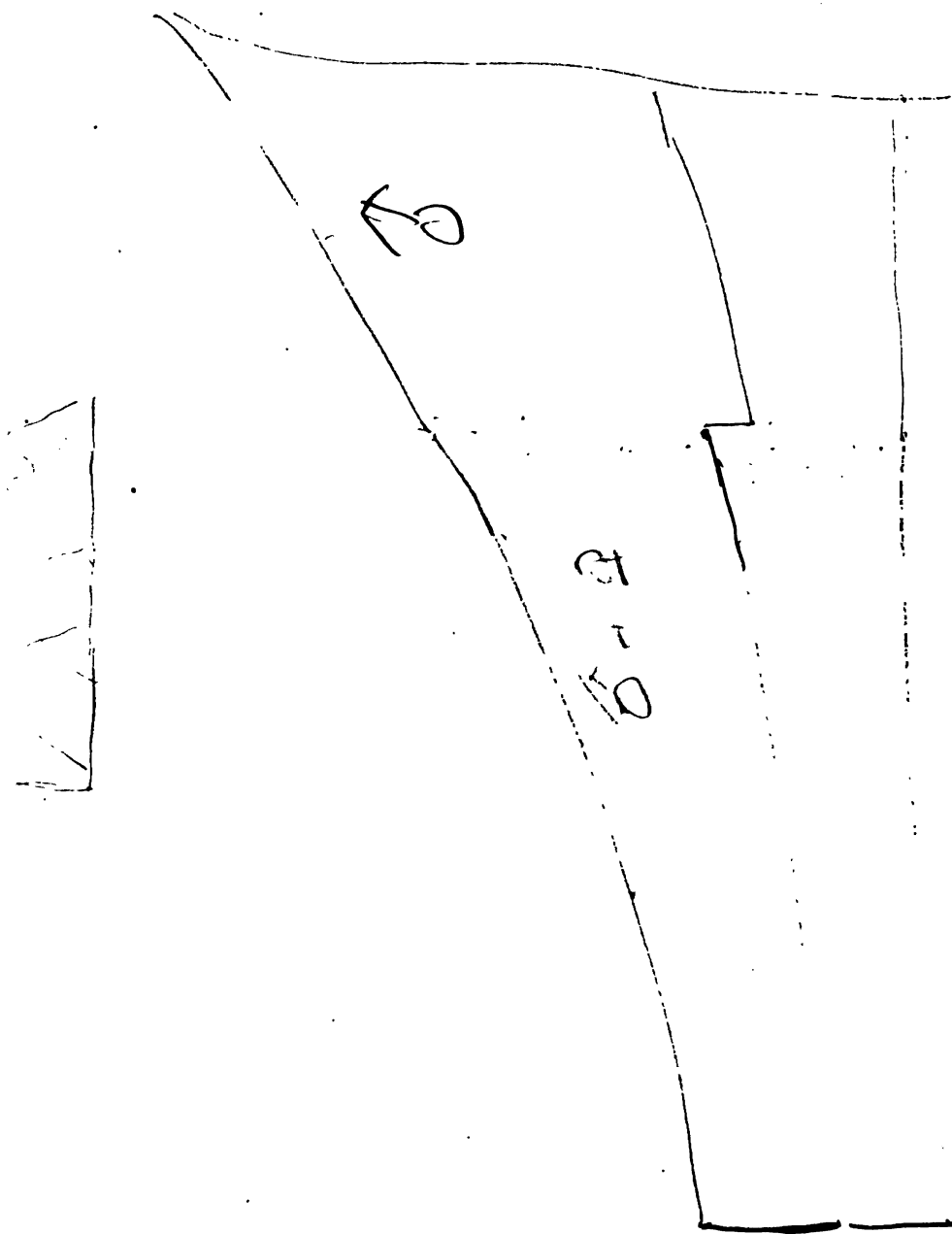
In the year 1892, Mr. P. A. Holst, while collecting on the Motobu Promontory of the island of Okinawa, captured a frog that became the type of *Rana holsti* Boulenger. The original description drew attention to "a very prominent knob (rudiment of a pollex) on inner side of first finger." Owing to the fact that for many years the species was known only from the type specimen, an investigation of the bony structure of the limb was quite out of question. There is now sufficient material to permit a dissection of the fore limb in the two species for which the genus *Babina* is established. This has revealed a condition unique in the class Batrachia, recent or extinct.

The metacarpal bone of the thumb is converted into a very sharp, slightly curved spur. The fleshy tip of this digit is perforated to allow free exit to the weapon. The musculature of the forearm is developed for powerful adductor movements.

This spur is used as a means of defence when attacked by other animals, among the frogs themselves when quarreling, and for the purpose of cracking the carapace of the crabs that form a part of the frog's diet.

So far as known, there is no other instance of a metacarpal bone being put to these extraordinary uses. The only case of the terminal phalanx of a batrachian being exposed occurs in the genus *Gampsosteonyx* Boulenger, from the Gaboon (1900, P. Z. S. pt. III, p. 442, pl. XXIX; 1901, P. Z. S. pt. II, p. 710, pl. XXXVIII, fig. 2-3).

SAN FRANCISCO,
June 11, 1912.



HERPETOLOGICAL NOTICES

No. 2

JUNE 28, 1912

**Prodrome of Descriptions of
New Species of Reptilia and Batrachia
from the Far East**

BY

SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

**SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR
1912**

PRODROME OF DESCRIPTIONS OF NEW SPECIES OF REPTILIA AND BATRACHIA FROM THE FAR EAST

BY

SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

A rapid survey of some of the material in the herpetological collection of the California Academy of Sciences has brought to light a few species that are new to science. There are also a few that are of interest owing to their showing slight variations from the typical form, as described from mainland specimens or from examples taken in adjoining groups of islands.

The author does not share the view held by certain colleagues in taxonomic work that each minute insular variation of a species should be described as a new species. But unless provision is made by suggesting a name, it is only a question of time before they will appear elsewhere in print as new species described by some other author.

HYLIDÆ

Hyla hallowellii new species

Type.—No. 23808 California Academy of Sciences; male; Kikaigashima, Loo Choo Islands; June 21, 1909.

Specific Characters.—Tongue small, slightly nicked and free behind. Vomerine teeth on a level with the posterior margin of the choanæ, in two slightly interrupted patches (in many specimens these patches are fused). Head broader than long; snout rounded, shorter than the diameter of the eye; canthus rostralis distinct; loreal region nearly vertical and slightly concave; interorbital space much broader than the upper eyelid; tympanum distinct, about two fifths the diameter of the eye. Fingers slightly webbed at base; disc of third finger larger than tympanum; no projecting rudiment of a pollex. Toes two thirds webbed; disc of fourth toe as large as tympanum. The hind limb being carried forwards along the body, the tibio-tarsal articulation reaches to midway between the nostril and the eye. Skin smooth above, granulate beneath. Light green above, uniform white below; sides of back and thighs with faint grey spots. Male with a large light yellow external subgular vocal sac.

From snout to vent 31 millim.

Habitat.—Amamioshima and Kikaigashima, Oshima Group, Loo Choo Islands.

Hyla hallowellii differs from *H. arborea japonica* in more posterior position and shape of vomerine teeth, in having a more sharply defined canthus rostralis, and a smaller tympanum; from *Hyla chinensis* in longer hind limb. From both these species it differs in the coloration.

LACERTIDÆ

Tachydromus formosanus Boulenger

The original description of this species gives the inguinal pore count as two on each side. An examination of over one hundred specimens from a dozen localities evidences that the normal count is one pore on each side; occasional examples occur with one pore on one side and two on another. This form is closely allied to *T. septentrionalis*, and is a thoroughly valid species. It differs in having a much slighter build and longer tail, in there being no small interpolated keeled shields between the outer and the next to the outer row of dorsal shields. The coloration is also more sombre.

SCINCIDÆ

Lygosoma indica (Gray)

Specimens captured in Formosa may be separated from the typical form found on the mainland. They differ in having a more oblique loreal region and in having longer toes and tail. There are over twenty subdigital lamellæ under the fourth toe, the count usually being from twenty-two to twenty-five. Their color is decidedly duller; the brown lateral stripe is not so pronounced and not bordered beneath by a distinct whitish streak.

Should this variation be set apart from *L. indica*, it is to be known as *Lygosoma formosensis*. The type will be No. 18627 California Academy of Sciences; male; March 1909; Kan-shirei, Formosa; length from snout to vent 73 millim., tail 134.

Lygosoma incognita new species

Type.—No. 18700 California Academy of Sciences; male; March 1909; Koshun, Formosa.

Specific Characters.—Allied to *L. indica*. Differs in stouter body, in longer snout and limbs, and in shorter tail. Frontonasal rounded behind, barely in contact with frontal; frontal shorter than the frontoparietal and

parietals together; forty smooth scales round the middle of the body. When the limbs are pressed against the body the hind limb reaches to the axilla. From snout to vent 77 millim., tail 113 (tip regenerated).

Habitat.—South Formosa and Botel Tobago Island.

***Lygosoma okinavensis* new species**

Type.—No. 21537 California Academy of Sciences; male; May 1910; Okinawa Island, Loo Choo Islands.

Specific Characters.—Allied to *L. pellopleurus*. Differs in increased number of scale rows (28), in more pronouncedly carinate scales, in twelve rows of dorsal scales with keels (instead of six), in frontal entire (in typical form normally divided), in body shorter (the distance between the end of the snout and the fore limb is contained less than twice in the distance between axilla and groin), in longer limbs, in more subdigital lamellæ under fourth toe (13 to 14).

From snout to vent 61 millim., tail 56.

***Eumeces stimpsonii* new species**

Type.—No. 21645 California Academy of Sciences; male; May 1910; Ishigaki Island, Loo Choo Islands.

Specific Characters.—Allied to *E. marginatus*. Twenty-six scales round the middle of the body, the two dorsal series barely perceptibly enlarged, laterals smaller than the ventrals. Sole of hind foot with a single, somewhat irregular, series of enlarged tubercles and plates from heel to base of fourth toe.

From snout to vent 57 millim., tail 97.

***Eumeces marginatus* (Hallowell)**

Specimens from Amamiyoshima and Kikaigashima, two islands in the Oshima Group of the Loo Choos, may be distinguished from the typical form found in Okinawa Island. They differ in having regularly 28 rows of scales round the middle of the body and in the two dorsal series not being enlarged. These differences appear constant through a fairly large series.

For those who feel the necessity of giving to such a geographical variation a new name, or of promoting it to subspecific rank, the name *Eumeces oshimensis* is proposed. The type would then be No. 21729 California Academy of Sciences; male; April 1910; Kikaigashima, Loo Choo Islands.

SAN FRANCISCO,
June 25, 1912.



HERPETOLOGICAL NOTICES

No. 3

JULY 31, 1912

**On Reptiles New to the Island Arcs
of Asia**

BY

SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

**SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR
1912**

ON REPTILES NEW TO THE ISLAND ARCS OF ASIA

BY

SURGEON J. C. THOMPSON, U. S. N.

In the preface to Vol. VIII of the "Catalogue of the Fishes in the British Museum" Dr. Albert Günther enunciates in the following terms the principle by which he was guided in naming species: "I consider a species to be well established only when it is founded on characters which, from an examination of numerous examples, are found to be permanent, not subject to *gradual* variation, and not dependent on season, sex, or age—or which are known to be so from the examination of allied forms."

An amateur who endeavors to live up to this standard may aspire to be a less frequent contributor to the field of synonymy than might otherwise be the case.

***Mabuia longicaudata* (Hallowell)**

Formosan specimens differ slightly from the mainland ones in several respects. The tail and limbs are longer. The majority of the dorsal and lateral scales are bicarinate and not tricarinate as one finds in examples from Hainan. The scales are not uniformly bicarinate, even in the same specimen; it is only the preponderating condition, for one finds, especially on the nape and shoulders, many scales with three and occasionally four keels. Only upon the ground of the desire to multiply names could one resort to the use of *M. rhustrati* (Fischer) to designate the Formosan form.

***Lygosoma* (*Leiolopisma*) *laterale* Say**

Mr. G. A. Boulenger frankly admits he cannot distinguish between American and Chinese specimens of this species.

Mr. L. Stejneger has "been unable, upon the most searching comparison, to discover any difference between Riu Kiu specimens and typical *L. laterale*." It is needless to comment that the facts are in perfect accord with these findings. Yet one can safely prophesy that ere long the specimens taken in Formosa and the Loo Choo Islands will appear disguised under a subspecific alias. Should this setting of them apart be insisted upon, the following names will be found convenient.

The Formosan specimens will be called *Lygosoma laterale* var. *formosensis*. The type will be No. 25026 California Academy of Sciences; male; March 1909; Kanshirei, Formosa.

There are several characters by which they may be distinguished from the typical American specimens, especially by their habit which is decidedly stouter and by the more pointed snout. There are regularly 26-28 smooth scales round the middle of the body; the limbs and the digits are much longer; when adpressed the fourth toe reaches to the wrist joint; there are usually 15-17 lamellæ under the longest toe; the tail is shorter and stouter, and it is more fragile and more frequently cast off; the males are more highly colored beneath, the throat and abdomen are a bluish white, the under surface of the head and the tail are thickly spotted with brown; the females are spotted beneath to about the extent that the males are in the American specimens.

The specimens from Ishigaki Island will be called *Lygosoma laterale* var. *ishigakiensis*. The type will be No. 21677 California Academy of Sciences; male; May, 1910; Ishigaki Island, Loo Choo Group. There are several characters by which they may be distinguished from the typical American form, notably by their habit which is fully twice as stout. There are regularly 28-30 scales round the middle of the body; the præfrontals are broadly in contact, thus preventing the frontal and frontonasal from touching; the limbs are longer, when adpressed they just meet; there are 15-17 lamellæ beneath the fourth toe; their color is characteristic in that it lacks any bluish metallic sheen either above or below, and the tail is much lighter beneath.

***Achalinus spinalis* Peters**

Five specimens recorded from Hondo and Kiushu have the ventrals 146-166, the caudals 45-61, the average being V. 161, C. 53.

Three specimens captured on Amamioshima, in the Loo Choo Group, have the ventrals 157-170, the caudals 88-96, the average being V. 163, C. 92. The pupil is vertically subelliptic. The dark dorsal stripe is strictly confined to the median scale row; the posterior temporal and the lateral nuchal region are a dusky buff.

The Loo Chooan examples differ from the typical Japanese in a decidedly increased number of caudal vertebræ and in coloration. These differences are not regarded as of specific value. Nevertheless, due provision is made by suggesting the tentative name of *Achalinus loochooensis* for No. 22064 California Academy of Sciences; female; May, 1910; Amamioshima, Loo Choo Group.

***Callophis maclellandii* (Reinhardt)**

Five specimens of the *forma typica*, as defined by Mr. Boulenger, are recorded by him from the mainland of Asia, ranging from Assam to Fokien. These have the ventrals 193-219, the caudals 26-36, the average being V. 210, C. 30.

Six specimens of var. *univirgatus* Gthr. from Nepal, Sikkim, and Assam have the ventrals 182-231, the caudals 25-32, the average being V. 206, C. 29.

Three specimens of the typical form are recorded from Formosa; in these the ventral count is 218-240, the caudal 33-41, and the average V. 230, C. 36. The color pattern is fairly uniform. Above it is reddish brown with about thirty light-edged black rings on the body and six on the tail. On the ventrals, between each ring, there is a large black spot. On the sides, between each ring, there is a small black speck covering about half a scale in the fourth series; occasionally these may be present on one side only, or absent entirely. On the nape there is the trace of a black vertebral line.

Wallace has long ago called our attention to the fact that where a serpent inhabits both the mainland and adjoining islands, individuals captured on the islands frequently possess a larger number of vertebræ. The Formosan specimens of *C. macclellandii* Gray, in having the increased vertebral count, simply afford another instance of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the extremes in the mainland and the island specimens broadly overlap. Therefore, should the Formosan examples be promoted to the rank of a species, they would be far from conforming with the standard set by the savant, Dr. Günther. On the other hand, the criterion of a certain school of species-makers is so alien to this standard, that one is forced to suggest a provisional new name, and none would be more appropriate than *Callophis formosensis*.

The type will be No. 18864 California Academy of Sciences; male; March, 1909; Kosempo, Formosa; length from snout to vent 466 millim., tail 60.

The collection of the California Academy of Sciences presents the following additional facts relating to the zoogeography of the Far East.

Additions to the Fauna of Korea

GEOMOLGE FISCHERI Boulenger.

CACOPOIDES BOREALIS Barbour.

RANA RUGOSA Schlegel.

RANA PLANCYI Boulenger.

Addition to the Fauna of Hokkaido

HYNOBIUS LICHENATUS Boulenger

Additions to the Fauna of the Loo Choo Archipelago

HYLA HALLOWELLII Thompson.

EUMECES STIMPSONII Thompson.

LYGOSOMA (HOMOLEPIDA) OKINAVENSIS Thompson.

LYGOSOMA (EMOA) ATROCOSTATUM (Gray).

ACHALINUS SPINALIS Peters.

DAMONIA MUTICA (Cantor).

Additions to the Fauna of Formosa

LYGOSOMA (HINULIA) INCOGNITA Thompson.

LYGOSOMA (LEIOLOPISMA) LATERALE Say.

LYGOSOMA (EMOA) ATROCOSTATUM (Gray).

Additions to the Fauna of Guam

HEMIDACTYLUS FRENATUS Gray.

LEPIDODACTYLUS LUGUBRIS (Gray).

VARANUS INDICUS (Daudin).

LYGOSOMA (EMOA) CYANURUM (Gray).

Addition to the Fauna of Wake Island

LYGOSOMA (EMOA) CYANURUM (Gray).

SAN FRANCISCO,

July 29, 1912.



OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF THE MUSEUM OF
ZOOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY.

A MOST REGRETABLE TANGLE OF NAMES

By T. BARBOUR.

For the benefit of the zoologists of the future it is only just to attempt to settle the standing of certain names proposed in leaflets, privately printed, which may cause great confusion in future zoological nomenclature. In these leaflets, which appeared within a few days of each other, the same names are used for the same creatures independently described by two authors. Thus is the case badly complicated. For the sake of fixing the status of these names I have assumed that the dates printed upon each of the so-called "Herpetological Notices" is correct. Since most herpetologists have not seen these papers a description of each is in order.

1. Herpetological Notices | No. 1—June 15, 1912 | Pro-
drome of a Description of a New Genus of Ranidae from | the
LooChoo Islands | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. |
San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912.

The title page is page 1. Upon page 2 and 3 is given a short diagnosis of *Babina*, a new genus of Ranidae, having the

"metacarpal of pollux developed into a sharp and powerful spur." *Rana holsti* Blgr. is the type species, the only other included being *Rana subaspera* Barbour. This is the total contents.

2. Herpetological Notices | No. 2—June 28, 1912 | Pro-drome of Description of New Species of Reptilia and Batrachia | from the Far East | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. | San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912.

Again the title page is page 1, while upon pages 2, 3 and 4 the following forms are named. *Hyla hallowelli* from Amamioshima and Kikaigashima in the LooChoo Islands, the type being No. 23808, collection of the California Academy of Sciences. A note follows showing that *Tachydromus formosanus* Blgr. is a valid species. Then under the heading *Lygosoma indica* (Gray) we read that Formosan specimens may be separated by certain definite characters from those upon the mainland, and the remark is added, "Should this variation be set apart from *L. indica* it is to be known as *Lygosoma formosensis*. The type will be No. 18627 California Academy of Sciences."

Then follow diagnoses of *Lygosoma incognita*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 18700; *Lygosoma okinawensis*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 21537; *Lygosoma stimpsonii*, new species, type Cal. Ac. Sci. No. 21645.

The final paragraph gives the reader a clue to the possible reason why these leaflets have appeared. We read after a few lines showing that the specimens of *Eumeces marginatus* (Hallowell) from Amamioshima and Kikaigashima are constantly different from those upon Okinawashima and the islands nearby, the following:—"For those who feel the necessity of giving to such a geographical variation a new name, or of promoting it to subspecific rank, the name *Eumeces oshi-*

mensis is proposed. The type would then be No. 21729, California Academy of Sciences." * * * Evidently Doctor Thompson did not believe that this name should be bestowed, and the impression follows that he has some other reason for giving it. This impression later becomes a conviction.

3. Herpetological Notices | No. 3—July 31, 1912 | On Reptiles New to the Island Arcs | of Asia | by | Surgeon J. C. Thompson, U. S. N. | San Francisco | Published by the Author | 1912. In this case the subject matter begins upon page 1 and continues to page 5.

Doctor Thompson first, after having showed that, in *Mabuia longicaudata* (Hallowell), "Formosan specimens differ slightly from the mainland ones in several respects," proceeds to inform us that "Only upon the ground of the desire to multiply names could one resort to the use of *M. rhustrati* (Fischer) to designate the Formosan form."

Writing of *Lygosoma laterale* Say, Thompson quotes Boulenger and Stejneger to the effect that Chinese and American individuals of this species are indistinguishable. "Yet," he adds, "one can safely prophesy that ere long the specimens taken in Formosa and the Loo Choo Islands will appear disguised under a subspecific alias." He then proceeds to name *Lygosoma laterale* var *formosensis*, the type being 25026 Cal. Ac. Sci., and *Lygosoma laterale* var *ishigakiensis*, the type being 21677 Cal. Ac. Sci.

Setting off the Riu Kiuan race of *Achalinus spinalis* Peters, we learn that "The Loo Chooan examples differ from the typical Japanese in a decidedly increased number of caudal vertebrae, and in coloration. *These differences are not regarded as of specific value* (Italics mine). Nevertheless, due provision is made by suggesting the tentative name of *Achal-*

inus loochooensis for No. 22064 California Academy of Sciences" * * *

Showing similar characters separating the Formosan examples of *Callophis maclellandii* (Reinhardt) from those upon the mainland, he proceeds to add, after remarking upon the inconsequence of these characters, that "On the other hand, the criterion of a certain school of species-makers is so alien to this standard, that one is forced to suggest a provisional new name, and none would be more appropriate than *Callophis formosensis*," the type, 18864 Cal. Ac. Sci.

The leaflet closes with nominal additions to the fauna of a number of Oriental regions and islands.

So much for a reading of Doctor Thompson's contributions, which were printed by the Hicks-Judd Co., of San Francisco.

Imagine one's surprise upon receiving and reading the following pamphlet "Published San Francisco, July 29, 1912." This antedates by two days Thompson's third notice. The appearance of this brochure is very similar to those of Thompson, in arrangement and typography. The paper, however, is differently watermarked and no printer's name is to be found. The title is | Advance Diagnoses of New Reptiles | and Amphibians from the Loo Choo | Islands and Formosa | By John Van Denburgh. | A writer who has long been known most favorably to all herpetologists, the world over, as an accurate, painstaking and skillful scientist.

The contents of this paper include a diagnosis of *Babina* with *Rana holsti* as type; a description of *Hyla hallowelli* from Kikaigoshima the type No. 23806 Cal. Ac. Sci.; a diagnosis of *Japalura polygonata ishigakiensis*; *J. p. miyakensis*; *Eumeces barbouri*; *Eumeces marginatus amamiensis*; *E. m. kikaigensis*; *E. ishigakiensis*; *E. chinensis formosensis*; *Sphenomorphus*

indicus formosensis; *Sphenomorphus boulengeri*; *Leiolepisma laterale boettgeri*; *Lygosaurus pellopleurus browni*; *Takydromus stejnegeri Achalinus weneri*, and *Callophis swinhoei*.

Dr. Van Denburgh has published his formal paper "Concerning Certain Species of Reptiles and Amphibians from China, Japan, the Loo Choo Islands, and Formosa (Proc. Cal. Ac. Sci., Ser. 4, Vol. III, p. 187-258, Dec. 16, 1912), and there full data can be obtained regarding all of Dr. Van Denburgh's species. I noticed at once, however, that no reference was made to Thompson's descriptions though two of Thompson's papers antedated Van Denburgh's preliminary. This fact with the duplication of names which I observed led me to write a letter of inquiry to both Dr. Van Denburgh and Dr. Thompson, as I myself was engaged in working upon material from these areas at that time.*

The following is Dr. Thompson's answer:

U. S. S. ALBATROSS,
Sausalito, Calif.,

December 27, 1912.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of December 14th is written in a grossly insinuating tone. It is obnoxious to the limit.

The alternative presents of replying in terms that would border on being contraband in the mails, or of calling attention to the absurdity of your attempting to sit in judgment on matters which your distance from the scene of action and ignorance of the facts combine to prevent the forming of an intelligent opinion.

I have been instrumental in bringing to the California Academy since the Fire about 12,000 specimens of reptiles.

* It is extremely unfortunate that I am unable to publish my own letters in this connection, but I carelessly failed to retain copies.

And Dr. Van Den Burgh (*sic*), a paid employee of the Institution, has essayed the old, old trick of rushing into print with material belonging to another. In this case he used the suggested names, and copied so hastily from my notes that the paper contains over a dozen misspelled words. Thus we "strangely seem to have hit upon the same names for many species."

You refer to publishing leaflets privately as a "reprehensible practice." The most elementary knowledge of bibliography will disclose the fact that this has been done by all grades of workers, from the amateur to the most renowned.

You can make "quite sure of the accuracy of the dates of the three "Herpetological Notices" by inquiring the date of their receipt at the Library of the Zoological Society of London.*

I am publishing privately a "Review of the Recent Contributions to the Synonymy of Amphibia and Reptiles from the Far East," and when you deign to peruse a copy you will find the future workers in the field of Bibliography and Zoological Philology will have no trouble in locating the synonyms. You are being sent an advance sheet.

You really should not be so peeved just because Dr. Van Den Burgh attached your honorable name to a deformed skink, —or because you so completely missed the point in the thumb of *Rana subaspera* Barbour.

(Signed) Yours, etc.,

J. C. THOMPSON,

Surgeon, U. S. Navy.

* My inquiry regarding dates was because I received all three "Notices" at one time. One would naturally suppose from the method of publication that they would each be distributed immediately they were printed. Obviously the time of their arrival in London has no connection with the exact date of their appearance in San Francisco.

This is Dr. Van Denburgh's answer, somewhat different in character from that of Dr. Thompson's.

Jan. 2, 1913.

Mr. Dear Mr. Barbour:—

Your letter of Dec. 14th has just reached me. It contains the first definite information I have received regarding the actual publication of papers by Dr. Thompson. I had reason to believe that he was probably about to publish, and it was for this reason that I rushed the diagnoses of new forms into print last July. The story is a rather long and unpleasant one. Dr. Thompson, as you perhaps know, is a naval surgeon. After his row with Alexander Agassiz, he came to me and said he had been very badly treated and had resolved to give up fishes and devote himself to a study of snakes, exclusively. He was then on his way to the Philippines, and asked me if I would help him with his work if he collected extensively all groups of reptiles and amphibians for the Academy. This was in the winter of 1905-1906. Later large collections were secured in China, Japan, the Loo Choo Islands and Formosa. I enclose a few extracts from letters from him to me and a copy of a letter which I sent him, May 6th, 1912, which may help you to understand the situation and the extreme difficulty of dealing with this erratic individual. Previous to January, 1911, I had spent much time working up these collections and had in MSS. all the descriptions I have recently published. Thompson then expressed himself as much pleased with this work, but when I let him take the MSS. he went through it and made a list of all my new species and subspecies, by name. He then proposed that I should give him joint authorship in all papers I should ever write (with two exceptions noted in letter) whether or not he had anything to do with their preparation. This I, of course, declined to do,

and he thereupon broke relations with me and stated that he desired to work up his collection himself. This I was quite willing he should do, and I at once stopped working with them, although I had every right to finish as I had begun. I was not, however, willing to throw away the work I had already done, and upon Dr. Thompson's return to this country I wrote him the letter, a copy of which I enclose. He presented no reason for my not publishing other than that he wished to do so himself, so on May 18, 1912, I presented the MSS. to the Academy, for publication. Thompson then threatened the officers of the Academy with injunctions and suits for damages, etc. The whole matter was delayed for months while the Academy made an investigation, found that I was right, and ordered my MSS. printed. In the meantime Dr. T. was busy with the specimens and probably had access to my MSS. When it became evident that he was getting ready to put my species into print I had diagnoses of them printed privately. Your letter, as I have said, is the first I have heard of his "Herpetological Notices." I, therefore, cannot tell when they were printed or whether the given dates are actually the dates of publication. This I suppose will have to be determined by the dates when they were received by libraries and museums. As far as I can learn no copies have been distributed here to individuals, or the Academy or either University. I should be very glad to know more about these publications—their alleged dates, species described, type specimen numbers, name of printer if given, etc. If you would be good enough to lend me your copies I should be very glad to examine and return them to you. Or, would you perhaps obtain from Dr. Thompson a duplicate set for me. A letter sent to the California Academy of Sciences would reach him there. Owing to strained relations I am unable to obtain them directly. I will then try to

trace the matter and let you know what I learn. My original paper has just been published by the Academy. I send you a copy under separate cover.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) J. VAN DENBURGH.

It seems hardly worth while to comment upon these writings. I have never had the privilege of meeting Dr. Van Denburgh nor have I ever, so far as I am aware, seen Dr. Thompson. I think I may truthfully say that I received the four publications with my mind absolutely free from personal bias. I have undertaken to put these notes on record at the request of several scientific friends as an aid to the naturalists of the future, who will surely be sadly confused by this curious literature. I take no sides and make no attempt to pass judgment on the reasons for the identity of the names in Dr. Thompson's and Dr. Van Denburgh's brochures. One attitude of mind will, however, be condemned by all and will be considered at least of doubtful ethics, and that is the proposal and publication of scientific names with the assertion attached that the describer himself did not believe in their validity and only named them because, as Thompson says, "one can safely prophesy that ere long the specimens * * * will appear under a subspecific alias" and that "due provision is made" in naming the separated Riu Kiuan *Achalinus spinalis*; when we read with the same breath that "These differences are not regarded as of specific value." Further remark is unnecessary.



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